

ULAB Physics & Astronomy Installation Guide

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1 Preface

This guide will serve as the instructions for installing various software and packages that we will be using throughout the semester. The specific installation process may vary based on the operating system of your computer. If you encounter any issues, reach out to the ULAB staff for help! The “questions” channel on Slack is also a great forum!

2 Git

Git is a version control system designed to tracking changes made to a file. Git and GitHub are extremely useful tools for writing and sharing code with your peers. Git is generally a topic that we cover second semester, but we have placed it at the start of this guide because it is a prerequisite for the next section. You will be using Git to access Python assignments and submitting on bCourses.

Download git ([link](#)) and install onto your computer. To check that the installation was successful, open up the terminal (a program called “terminal” on Mac and Linux and “Command Prompt” on Windows) and enter `git --version`. Your installation was successful if you do not see the message `command not found`. Here is a [getting started to installing Git guide](#) that you might find helpful!

3 Bash

When people talk about the “terminal” or “command-line,” they’re referring to the shell: a program that serves as a text-based interface with the kernel. We’ll discuss what this means in lecture!

There are many types of shells, notably Bash (Unix), DOS (Windows) and zsh (Mac). Bash, the ~~Bourne-Again SHell~~¹, is the most popular shell², and the one we’ll be using. Installing Bash varies by OS.

¹Stephen Bourne was the author of the original Unix shell, on which Bash is based. Very punny!

²Or at least, commonly encountered.

3.1 Windows

The default shell on Windows is DOS. In the previous section, when you opened the “Command Prompt” program, you were using DOS. However, we want to use Bash.

Luckily, when installing git, you also installed Git Bash. You can find Git Bash in your applications folder. Git Bash is exactly what it sounds like: a Bash shell that comes with git. From now on, when we ask you to open the terminal, we mean the Bash terminal rather than the DOS Command Prompt.

3.2 Mac and Linux

Bash is the default shell on most Mac and Linux-based operating systems. To check if you’re using Bash, open the terminal and type `echo $0`. This command should return `bash`.

4 Anaconda (Python and Jupyter Notebook)

Anaconda is a distribution of Python bundled with additional packages and software that are very useful for data science.

Download Anaconda ([link](#)) and install onto your computer.

Windows Installation Guide: <https://docs.anaconda.com/anaconda/install/windows/>

macOS Installation Guide: <https://docs.anaconda.com/anaconda/install/mac-os/>

All Installation Guides: <https://docs.anaconda.com/anaconda/install/index.html>

Make sure to select “Add Anaconda to my PATH environment variable” if it is not selected by default. If prompted, you do not have to install PyCharm.

To verify the installation, open the terminal and,

1. Check that Anaconda is installed: `conda --version`
2. Check that Python3 is installed: `python --version`. Make sure that the version is 3.x, not 2.x
3. Check that Jupyter Notebook is installed `jupyter notebook --version`